

● Article ●

Identity Crisis and Negotiation of a Japanese Peruvian in *Mezameyo to Ningyo wa Utau* (*Wake-up, Sings a Mermaid*) (『目覚めよと人魚は歌う』) by Hoshino Tomoyuki

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Abstract

Mezameyo to Ningyo wa Utau (*Wake-up, Sings a Mermaid*) (2000) (『目覚めよと人魚は歌う』), an award-winning contemporary Japanese novel published by Hoshino Tomoyuki, can be interpreted as a literary space of border-crossing in which a twenty-two year-old mixed race Japanese Peruvian protagonist, Hiyohito, crosses the borders among his Japanese, Peruvian, and Japanese Peruvian identities, trying to find out who he is and where he belongs to. Hiyohito has avoided recognizing his multiple identities, insisting on his Japaneseness and rejecting his Peruvian side. As the novel progresses, however, he gradually comes to acknowledge his multiple selves through interactions with the others surrounding him who provoke him to remember his past.

Applying the concepts closely related to the themes of border-crossing and identity formation processes articulated by scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, and Stuart Hall, this study contemplates how claiming a single fixed identity can lead one to the confinement of a rigidly marked category from which she or he cannot be liberated, yet at the same time how the rigidly defined identity can be used as a point of departure to reveal the fact that identity is situated in a clear spatio-temporal context and to remark on the fact that identity construction is *always* positional and contingent upon a specific context.

She [*La mestiza*] has discovered that she can't hold concepts or ideas in rigid boundaries. The borders and walls that are supposed to keep the undesirable ideas out are entrenched habits and patterns of behavior; these habits and patterns are the enemy within. Rigidity means death.

Gloria Anzaldúa

Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza (2nd ed. 2007, 101)

In her essay, “La consciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness,” Gloria Anzaldúa expresses that a *mestiza*, referring to the term as the collective identity of Chicana, as well as her individual self, cannot survive in an environment where spatiotemporal, cultural, racial, ethnic, and gender boundaries are rigidly demarcated, prohibiting her from easily crossing them. *La mestiza* must wander back and forth between the “borders and walls,” unlocking their closed gates in order to challenge and resist the rigidity of the boundaries that leads her to death (101). Situated at the border-crossing sites, *la mestiza* constantly reconfigures her identity, not as a fixed entity or category, but as something continuously changing and contingent on the encounters, interactions, and/or collisions that arise upon her border-crossings. But is it possible to entirely evade the rigidity of boundaries? Although Anzaldúa declares that “rigidity means death” (101), can we enthusiastically celebrate the emergence of the ambivalence of “the new *mestiza* consciousness” as the result of eliminating the rigidity? And if we can be fully freed from rigid boundaries (i.e. identity and category), can we still claim which boundaries and borders we stayed in and crossed and will cross and see again, in order to situate ourselves in a certain place and time, yet at the same time avoid any coerced positioning?

Anzaldúa’s following words may suggest a hint to approach these questions.

As a *mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman’s sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet (102-03).

At one level, she illustrates *la mestiza*’s (her) incessant state of in-between-ness which situates her identity in the multiplicity of contradictory and ambivalent conditions. The rigidity of the cultural and social boundaries,

which she claims to be death, seems to fade. At another level, however, she seems to proclaim her clearly defined identities – “*mestiza*,” “lesbian,” and “feminist” which are described and maintained as the core of “the new *mestiza* consciousness” (102-03). The supposedly obliterated rigidity that disables her from declaring one single particular identity and allows her to hold multiple identities, in reality, has not yet *fully* disappeared; on the contrary, it is an unavoidable contrariety that emerges in the process of identity formation, especially when an individual or a group searches for her/his identity(ies) that do not correspond to the classifications and categories formulated and established by social and cultural norms and order. Anzaldúa’s concept of *la mestiza*’s identity suggests that the rigidity of boundaries is a necessary point of departure to situate *la mestiza*’s identity, experiences, and voices in multiple, yet specific spatiotemporal contexts. Being located in multiple spatiotemporal contexts, *la mestiza*’s border-crossings begin, intersecting plural identities and categories found within those spaces and times. In these movements and fluxes, the multiplicity, “ambivalence,” using Anzaldúa’s term, of *la mestiza*’s consciousness emerges, not as the binary opposition of the rigidity of her identity and category, but as an agglomeration of contacts and collisions that take place among and within the rigidly defined identities and categories.

This emergence of multiplicity, which disturbs the orderly defined categories and identities, yet is closely related to the rigidity of categories and identities, can be further explored through the concept of the “lines of segmentarity” articulated by Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet. Deleuze and Parnet assert that “lines of segmentarity” are “all kinds of clearly defined segments, in all kinds of directions, which cut us up in all senses, packets of segmentarized lines,” (124) (which are constructed based on “binary machines of social classes,” (128)) yet that beneath the rigidly marked segments, the lines possess an immanent impulse to escape the rigidity, move around, and intersect with each other beyond the established order and codes of a society (124-33). Thus the “lines of segmentarity,” which function to position us (individuals and groups) in identifiable categories, paradoxically transform themselves into multiple “lines of flight” which “constitut[e] becomings, blocs of becoming, making continuums of intensity, combinations of fluxes” (130), enabling us to constantly dismantle and destabilize any fixity (124-33). In other words, the potency of mobility, fluidity, and versatility that “the lines of segmentarity”

(that is simultaneously *already* the “lines of flight”) latently hold make the lines tangle up and intersect with each other, creating the moments of becomings, which Deleuze and Parnet call the “immanent plane of consistence,” where “[w]e don’t know in advance which one will function as line of gradient, or in what form it will be barred” (133). Though the rigid “lines of segmentarity” do not utterly disappear, are continuously destabilized and reshaped based on their movements and “combinations of fluxes” (130). The rigidity continues to exist, yet it becomes contingent on the circumstances, settings, and conditions, including space and time, when and how the movements of the lines (border-crossings for Anzaldúa) occur. It is this contingency that allows us to be free from rigidity and enables us to enunciate our identities (which are also contingent on certain circumstances) without fixating them.

Stuart Hall also draws attention to the contingency of established categories, in order to examine how human identity is constantly being formed, reformed, and transformed within specific and discursive historical, cultural, and institutional conditions. Hall, referring to this identity (re/trans) formation as a “process of identification,” underlines the fluidity and temporariness of identity:

I use ‘identity’ to refer to the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us. (“Who Needs ‘Identity’?” 5-6 emphasis original)

Hall interprets identity as something born as a “split” stemming from “the meeting point, the point of suture” between how history, culture, and institution position us in a place (“a [fixed] cover story” in Hall’s term) and how we position ourselves in places (“the [constantly changing] play of history and the play of difference”) (“Who Needs ‘Identity’?” 5-6; “Ethnicity” 344).

Although Hall applies Derrida’s theory of *différance* to his argument of the deconstruction of the notion of identity formation, he is not convinced

that “the Self is simply a kind of *perpetual signifier* ever wandering the earth in search of a *transcendental signified* that it can never find – a sort of endless nomadic existence with utterly atomized individuals wandering in an endlessly pluralistic void” (“Ethnicity” 344 emphasis original).¹ Hall, rather, underscores the importance of acknowledging the moments of *becoming* – that is “the processes of identification,” in which the self is *positioned* within and in relation to specific, temporal, historical, cultural, and institutional locations. Hence, in the moments of *becoming*, “the so-called return to roots” cannot be realized, yet “a coming-to-terms-with our ‘routes’” must begin with “*somewhere*” – some place, some history, some culture, and some language (“Who Needs ‘Identity’?” 4; “Ethnicity” 347-48).

Mezameyo to Ningyo wa Utau (*Wake-up, Sings a Mermaid*) (2000),² an award-winning Japanese novel written by Tomoyuki Hoshino, bears witness to “the processes of identification” of one of the main characters, Hiyohito, a 22 year-old mixed race Japanese Peruvian man, who has avoided recognizing the split or suture (as used in Hall’s study) of his identities, but gradually comes to acknowledge the split and the multiple selves born out of the split, through interactions with others surrounding him which evoke memories of the past.

Mezameyo is divided into sixteen sections of which the first two introduce the background of the main story. The novel opens with the voice of one of the main characters, Toko, a Japanese woman in her 30s, narrating, in the middle of night through dawn, the dreamy memory of her intimate relationship with her ex-lover in the past. The reader immediately learns that Toko lives in a quiet, isolated area, surrounded by a vast red clay plateau covered with Japanese pampas grass which she calls “a red desert;” that she has a son Mitsuo; and that she expects two visitors. One is the protagonist, Hiyohito, and the other is his Japanese girlfriend, Ana, whom she has never met before. Then, in the following section, a third-person narrator shifts from Toko’s story to the story of Hiyohito and Ana’s fleeing from where they currently live to the remote house where Toko lives, because of a violent gang fight in which Hiyohito has beaten to nearly death a Japanese gang member with an iron pipe. The narrator reveals that this incident starts with a hate crime against his Japanese Peruvian friend’s brother who is tortured to death by Japanese gangs, simply because of his race. His friend schemes a revenge against the Japanese gangs and asks Hiyohito to be a witness to the revenge scene, but not to participate in the

violence, and then to tell the mainstream press what really happens. In the rest of the novel, the author Hoshino, mixing the two narrative voices – Toko's narration and the third-person narrative voice which is often intermingled with Hiyohito's inner thoughts –, depicts relationships and interactions among the characters which stir up Hiyohito's memories of the past that have been erased for many years.

Hiyohito has associated himself with his Japanese side, in spite of his relationship with his Japanese Peruvian friends for whom he got involved in the incident, until he starts living with the “invented family” – an imaginary fake family, created by Marukoshi, Toko's “lover” and the owner of the house where she lives, for people who cannot find a sense of home or belonging somewhere else – in order to hide himself from the police. When Ana suggests that she and Hiyohito should flee to Peru, his birthplace, he vehemently rejects the idea saying that “it would be better to turn himself to the police in Japan,” rather than to return to Peru, “where his origin still vividly lives” (20). As the story progresses, his attempt to dissociate himself from Peru becomes more pronounced. For instance, Hiyohito uses the name Hiyo, shortened from his full name Alberto Hiyohito, which would indicate a half Hispanic identity. Moreover, the name Hiyohito itself embraces both Japan and Peru. His Japanese grandfather, who emigrated to Peru, named him Hiyohito, which means “Domingo” in Spanish when it is written in Kanji (the Japanese style of Chinese characters), which was his Peruvian grandmother's last name (46-47). However, he prefers to be called Hiyo, distancing himself from his Peruvian birth name. Another example of his separation from Peru is that Hiyohito perceives himself as different from other Japanese Peruvians who come to Japan as contract laborers called *dekasegi* (“migrant worker”) in Japanese. He came to Japan when he was a young boy with his mother, who left Peru for economic and personal reasons, and received his formal education in Japan. Hiyohito is fluent in Japanese and fantasizes that he is a Japanese-born who grew up in Japan and had a dream about living in Peru as a Japanese (115). In his mind, he is different from *dekasegi* people and has been indifferent toward the Japanese Peruvian workers who complain about racial discrimination and insist on their Japanese Peruvian identity and culture.

Hiyohito's strong sense of voluntary withdrawal and exclusion from Peru and Japanese Peruvians, however, eventually becomes weakened in the three-

day period of his fugitive life in the “invented family,” whose inhabitants only share the same living space without specific rules and expectations. Hiyohito, on encountering the members of the “invented family,” Toko, Marukoshi, and Mitsuo, Toko’s alienated son, begins to face existential questions (“Where am I?” “Who are those people?” “What am I doing here with those people?”) which further compel him to repeatedly reflect on what circumstances have brought him to the present state and how he should link his present state with his memories of the past. During these contemplations, Hiyohito momentarily recovers his memories of the past, recognizes the existence of multiple identities that have been shaped in and revived by specific spatio-temporal memories, and ultimately seeks a way to bridge his multiple identities, in hopes of answering why and how his identity has been formed as it is, at the present moment. Although Hiyohito connects all his selves that emerge in his memories and *temporarily* situates himself in the present space and time, in relation to his other selves from the past, the location of his identity cannot be *permanently* determined because it *always* intersects with the identities from the past, changing the position where it is situated. This study attempts to explore how *Mezameyo* can be interpreted as a text which exhibits Hiyohito’s border-crossings between the present and the past, through which he traces back the processes of his identity formation *around* his “routes,” not *to* his “roots,” to borrow Hall’s words. Hiyohito’s search for his identity can be a useful example of elucidating how claiming a single fixed identity can lead one to the confinement of a rigidly marked category from which s/he cannot be liberated. On the other hand, the story also illustrates how a rigidly defined identity can also be used as a point of departure to reveal the fact that identity is situated in a clear spatio-temporal context and to remark on the fact that identity construction is *always* positional and contingent upon a specific context.

As stated above, Hiyohito’s encounters and interactions with the inhabitants of the “invented family” awaken his memories of the past, his origin and childhood in Peru, so that he comes to recognize the existence of his multiple beings from the past. In this sense, the “invented family” provides Hiyohito with a place to meditate on his past, but, at the same time, the family is a deadly site of the imprisonment of his memories where a line of demarcation between the present and the past is rigidly drawn. Luckily, Hiyohito clearly sees the danger of perpetuating his being in the abyss of his

memories and escapes from this place with the help of his girlfriend Ana, because he recognizes the importance of continuing to cross the border, in order to keep alive his identities born out of border-crossings, even though they may appear in different shapes. In what follows, I will first show how the “invented family” functions as a force for awakening Hiyohito’s memories and for confining him in the prison of his memories, and then I will discuss how his journey of entering and escaping from the “invented family” can serve as an approach to the questions raised in the beginning of this study: How to be free from rigidly defined categories and identities and still be able to have a sense of who he is and where he belongs to.

After arriving at the house, Hiyohito and Ana meet all the inhabitants, Toko, Marukoshi, her lover who has inherited the house from his parents, and Mitsuo, Toko’s son. Toko is a person who lives with the memories of her life with her ex-lover and is the one who influences Hiyohito most in contacting his past, and I will come back to Toko to describe the relationship between the two. Marukoshi is the first person who takes Hiyohito back to his origin. He is a city librarian who does not seem to have much social life outside of this “invented family.” As soon as he meets Hiyohito and Ana, he begins his monolog, telling them that his parents have died; that he inherited the house from his father, who bought the land which was worthless because of a bad loan; that he met Toko at a costume party for *Rocky Horror Show II* fans which he found on the internet; and he invited Toko to live with him as part of an “invented family. Marukoshi, now inviting Hiyohito and Ana to be members of the “invented family,” asks Hiyohito if his name is in Peruvian. Hiyohito answers, “There is no language called Peruvian, but, yes, it is Spanish. My grandpa named me Hiyohito after my dead grandma’s last name, Domingo, which means Sunday, that is forcibly written [or phonetically put in Japanese symbols] as Hiyohito, the person of Sunday” (46). Marukoshi goes on to ask if Hiyohito’s grandfather can speak Japanese, and Hiyohito, annoyed with the ignorant question, abruptly answers, “Of course, he is *issei*, (the first generation)” (46). Although Hiyohito seems to answer Marukoshi’s questions without paying much attention to the meaning of the birth of his name, this is the first time that Hiyohito clearly enunciates the origin that embodies both his Japanese and Peruvian backgrounds.

This conversation can be interpreted as a space in which Hiyohito,

perhaps unintentionally, situates himself in the particular identity category of a grandson of a Japanese grandfather and a Peruvian grandmother. However, this category disappears when Marukoshi takes Hiyohito and Ana into the illusionary utopia of the “invented family.” Right after this conversation, Marukoshi shows Hiyohito and Ana a big seashell from Guyana (South America) which Marukoshi calls “Anthony” and plays some Mexican songs with the seashell instrument. Hiyohito and Ana move their bodies with the melodies that Marukoshi blows. Hiyohito sings along in Spanish, and Ana in some invented words. The three seem to lose sight of reality and immerse themselves into the fantasy of the music which erases geographical, cultural, and ethnic borders. Marukoshi, a Japanese playing Mexican songs with the seashell horn from Guyana, Hiyohito, a Japanese Peruvian dancing and singing in Spanish, and Ana, a Japanese woman swinging her body and saying some random words rhythmically along with the music are connected with one another without thinking about their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In this moment, neither Hiyohito’s identity previously enunciated as an assimilated being in the Japanese society, nor the location of his origin, matter. However, this moment of being free does not serve to erase Hiyohito’s previous identities, no matter how desirable it is for Marukoshi to eliminate all the differences and unite everyone as an imaginary family. In fact, after the dance, unlike Marukoshi’s utopian thinking, Hiyohito cannot stop searching for a connection between his childhood as Alberto Hiyohito in Peru, the last night’s revenge fight, and Takerito and his murdered younger brother, El Yamato.

In Hiyohito’s reflections, the image of Takerito vividly emerges, followed by the revenge scene. Takerito is the only Japanese Peruvian from whom Hiyohito does not distance himself. Takerito shares a similar background with Hiyohito, being successfully assimilated into mainstream Japanese society after having received his formal education from Japanese institutions since an early age and having advanced to college. The only differences between them are that Hiyohito works at a local factory while Takerito goes to college; and that Takerito has helped some of the Japanese Peruvian migrant workers. Yet both Takerito and Hiyohito are critical about the Japanese Peruvians who do not speak Japanese and proclaim their attachment to Peru (54). Takerito and Hiyohito also despise the Japanese Peruvian young migrant workers who form a gang to commit illegal and immoral activities in Japan, yet act up

when they are discriminated against because of such conduct. However, after Takerito's younger brother is killed, he joins a Japanese Peruvian gang and vows revenge for his brother, pronouncing that he takes the name Takerito (Takeru-jin) written in Japanese characters, which means "a furry being who dashes at the enemy," to be "both Japanese and Peruvian, yet neither Japanese nor Peruvian" (55-56). Takerito's declaration forces Hiyohito to think about his responsibility and role as a Japanese Peruvian in the vengeance of his friend. Following Takerito's new identity, Hiyohito also takes his Japanese Peruvian Hiyohito-Domingo identity in order to participate in the vengeance as a neutralist witness and then offer a calm, honest, and rational testimony to the mass media which may give Takerito peace of mind. However, as soon as the fight starts, a Japanese gang member finds Hiyohito and hits him with an iron pipe, shouting racist slurs, and Hiyohito grabs the pipe and starts beating this Japanese gang member with it, defending his race (57). Reflecting back on how and why Hiyohito, who has always maintained a distance between himself and the other Japanese Peruvians, gets involved in the fight as a descendant of Japanese and Peruvians and ends up reacting to the racial discrimination against Japanese Peruvians with violence, he can no longer decisively affirm his identity as a being assimilated into Japanese society.

The instability of Hiyohito's identity produced in his reflections is further fortified through his other encounters with the members of "the invented family." As in the first conversation with Marukoshi, the sequential pattern—1) Hiyohito's remembrance of his past incited by "the invented family;" 2) the evanescence of it in a utopian atmosphere; and 3) his recovery of his memories of the past in his reflective thoughts—often appears through his interactions with the family. Every time he experiences this sequence, he sees his multiple beings splitting while intermingling with one another, becoming volatile and undeterminable.

Hiyohito's encounter with Mitsuo, Toko's teenage son, who does not talk to anyone and spends most of the time alone, also provokes this pattern. Mitsuo's alienation is attributed to the lack of Toko's love and her unthinkable selfish desire to maintain her relationship only with her ex-lover, Mitsuo's father, both in the past and in her present-time fantasy, even if she would have to exclude her son. In the past, even when she learned of her pregnancy with Mitsuo, her thought was that she did not want to change the way she lived

with her lover. Then, Mitsuo was born, but she resisted to having a family relation with her lover and son together. She could only handle spending time with *either* her lover *or* son, but not with both of them. She soon came to the point where she could not stand the idea of the three living together and set fire to their apartment, from which Mitsuo the father and son managed to escape and later so did Toko. Eventually, Mitsuo's father took Mitsuo to his mother's house in his hometown, but he disappeared without any trace, and finally Toko took custody of Mitsuo. This is the background that Mitsuo the son had to go through, and I will come back to more details of Toko's past below. Because of his experience with his mother, Mitsuo is trapped in his own shell and does not know how to escape from there.

Hiyohito, while taking a walk, finds this alienated teenager in an abandoned shed, plucking a pigeon, cleaning its guts with an army knife, grilling it on a camp stove, and eating it. Looking at this scene, Hiyohito suddenly remembers his junior high school years, when he and his friends used to hunt birds and cats with air guns with poisonous bullets. The hunting was banned by the school, but the rumor that only Hiyohito and Takerito, not his other "friends," were eating the hunted animals spread. Hiyohito hit those who spread the rumor and forgot about it until now. He has the illusion that Mitsuo is eating the pigeon in place of him and is urged to tell him "you don't need to eat it" (74). This scene can be interpreted as Hiyohito's recovery of the memory that may remind him that Hiyohito and Takerito were separated from the others and put in the category of abnormal, uncivilized, rustic, and/or poor. That Hiyohito perceived himself as a well-integrated member of Japanese society may not correspond with how the others and the society viewed him. This memory functions as a reminder that as is the case with Mitsuo, Hiyohito is excluded and alienated from Japanese society.

Hiyohito's encounter with Mitsuo continues to provoke Hiyohito to remember that he has come from a foreign country and is not a hundred percent Japanese. Hiyohito knocks on a window of the shed to get in, but Mitsuo ignores him and keeps eating the pigeon. As Hiyohito pulls out the broken door to enter, Mitsuo rushes into Hiyohito and says "Yo, también" in Spanish (74). Hiyohito replies to Mitsuo's Spanish words in Spanish, but Mitsuo runs away toward the house. Hiyohito curses, "¡Pendejo!" (74). Toko suddenly appears in front of Hiyohito and flirtatiously tries to have

a conversation with him, but after having a small talk, Hiyohito is more interested in a Spanish conversation textbook that he finds there than in Toko. Flipping over the pages and reading a dialog, “– Juan: ¿Ustedes están cansados?; – Michiko: Sí, estoy muy cansada; – Akihito: Yo también” (80), Hiyohito understands that Spanish-speaking *dekasegi* migrant laborers used to work here, and some accusatory voice bursts into his mind: “Who in the world are you?; I won’t let you say, ‘I don’t know;’ you are not allowed to pretend that you don’t know why you are here” (80). Hiyohito feels guilty, not being able to articulate who he really is and what brings him there, in spite of his tie to the Spanish language and possibly the country of the *dakasegi* workers. Unable to find words to disencumber himself from his entangled thoughts, he suffers, yet “the invented family” rescues him from his distress.

A dumpling-dance party is held at the house, and everyone eats dumplings and dances with salsa music. Hiyohito teaches “the invented family” how to dance salsa, and even Mitsuo, who does not participate in the party at the beginning, starts dancing with Hiyohito. Though there is awkwardness between Toko and Mitsuo, all of them, for the first time, spend time together in the living room, doing the same dance activity. Marukoshi affirms that this is what “the invented family” should look like and puts everyone in a circle for more dances. The utopian moment of the dance party ends when Marukoshi tries to leave Toko and Mitsuo alone in the circle hand in hand, but fails to connect the two. Toko disappears from the scene, while Mitsuo no longer reacts to the music. While Hiyohito is freed from his thoughts about his identity during the dance party, as soon as he goes to his room to sleep, he is again haunted by his memories.

This time, he remembers his dance with El Yamato at Takerito’s 20th birthday party and sadly realizes that he cannot dance with El Yamato any longer. But at the same time Hiyohito comes to see the connection between him and El Yamato, who also learned how to dance as a child in Peru. Hiyohito understands that he is Alberto Hiyohito, who grew up dancing in Peru, and that El Yamato is Yamato Pablo, who did the same. Hiyohito’s enunciated tie to El Yamato and Peru leads him back to his childhood house in Peru. His recollections, one after another, vividly slither into his mind – the yellow and red flowers that surrounded the wall of the house, his cousin, the beer he had at the age of eight, a dance with his cousin, Ana María, a bet he made with

his friends about seducing her, her departure to Japan as a *dekasegi* worker and disappearance, señora San Juan's quilt bag gift to Hiyohito, her husband who was "disappeared" after a protest demonstration, a Hardrock Café Acapulco T-shirt exchanged for the quilt bag at a market, his runaway plan with the señora's daughter Susana, Susana's black hair and the smell of her body, the señora's vigilant eyes, and so on. Meditating on the photographically depicted scenes from the past, Hiyohito desperately wants to grasp how his present self, the one who beat the gang member, and the child in Peru are connected and why he became involved in the revenge fight. He says to himself, "I'm almost coming to see that that self [who danced in Peru like El Yamato] and the self who beat the guy nearly to death are being connected," and wants to believe that "all of Hiyohito's selves are him" and that "all the selves disconnected are in reality one Hiyohito" (94).

Meanwhile, Ana brings the bad news after talking to her friend on the phone that the gang member whom Hiyohito hit with an iron pipe has died and that Ricardo, a middle-aged *dakasegi* worker, who had nothing to do with the incident, has been assaulted. Hiyohito is seized with an uncontrollable impulse to get out of the refuge of "the invented family" and go back to his town (Kawasaki) to see Takerito, who is in jail. Hiyohito senses that if he stays with the "invented family," his multiple split selves will never intersect with one another and, each of them, disconnected from one another, will scatter away as an imaginary individual into the fictitious and fantastic world, just like the members of the "invented family." He ponders: "I never thought that that rat would die, not even a bit. This foolish Hiyo is the same Hiyo who couldn't help tasting the full delights of the dance yesterday at the party, and that Hiyo and the Hiyo, who is now desperately trying to calm the severity of the pain in his chest, are the same one" (98). In order to connect his splits, he knows that he must leave the "invented family," because while it serves as a safe place where Hiyohito's memories of the past are kindled and recovered, it entices him to remain there with the recovered memories without allowing him to connect the memories and his present situation and cross the border between the past and present. However, he cannot easily leave the family because of Toko's seduction through which she attempts to trap him in the immobilized bottom of memories.

Ana is the only one who has contact with the world outside of the

house, but now she leaves there after Hiyohito rejects her idea of hiding in “the invented family” until they find their next plans. Eventually, Ana comes back, and the two manage to leave the house, but till that moment, Hiyohito faces the danger of being coaxed into falling deep down in his memories of the past and locked up in the nostalgia of his memories. The first thing he does, being left alone, is to wander around the house and interacts with Mitsuo, playing and talking about the triton instrument Anthony. Mitsuo seems to open himself to Hiyohito and gives him a sweet and divine smile, which reminds Hiyohito of the image of his father told to him many times by his mother in Spanish. His mother used to tell him that his father’s smile shone like the sun and that people who saw his smile felt as if they were the lights that illuminated his face. Hiyohito remembers his mother’s voice repeating that he is his father’s double. The moment of retrieving his mother’s depiction of his father’s smile is interrupted by Mitsuo, who asks Hiyohito to leave him his salsa music MD (Minidisc) as a souvenir. Hiyohito realizes that Mitsuo wants to hold onto some sort of memory that recalls Hiyohito, and the image of Mitsuo, dancing alone with salsa music in the shed with an imaginary Hiyohito encroaching onto his mind. Hiyohito feels sorry for Mitsuo because of his alienation and loneliness, while at the same time he refuses the idea of becoming anyone’s memory, fearing that he may have to be split in the memory of Mitsuo, as he has done in his own memories of the past. In order to rescue Mitsuo from the alienation and himself from the entanglement of his split beings, Hiyohito decides to flee from the house with Mitsuo.

However, as mentioned earlier, Toko attempts to seduce Hiyohito into the chasm of memories and enclose him there, in order to make him relive his past, as she does, inside “the invented family.” As Hiyohito walks in her room to look for a key to Marukoshi’s car, he runs into Toko. While he knows that he needs to escape from the house with Mitsuo in order to connect himself with the present reality, he cannot help incessantly looking at the mysterious and sensual beauty of Toko, who cajoles him into unfolding his memories of Peru and also listening to her stories of the past. Hiyohito starts uncovering, in details, his memories with his grandfather’s stories told in Japanese during his childhood – the immigration of his grandfather to Peru from Niigata, a Northern prefecture of Japan, his nickname, Kitaro (Northerner), derived from his birthplace, and the beauty of his Peruvian grandmother, who had emerald

eyes and gold skin. Then, he narrates what he remembers from the stories about Brazil told in Spanish by his mother, a third-generation Japanese-Brazilian. Hiyohito's mother printed in his mind the image of her home country as a place filled with dancing and singing, as well as the picture of his father as a gorgeous-looking man who had a sunflower smile that seduced all the women in town, according to his mother. He goes on to tell her that his mother was sad when she found out about her son's elopement plan with Susana, which failed because Susana's mother intervened in the plan. This is not the first time that these memories emerge for Hiyohito, but this time, all the memories invoked earlier seem to converge in his mind, for the first time, along with new memories that lead him to connect his old memories and the newest ones, which trace back to why he is in Japan at this present time.

Toward the end of his memory telling, he comes to reveal that all of his family came to Japan as a *dekasegi* family because of an economic crisis in Lima and his father's love affair. He continues to disclose that his parents got divorced and that while his mother and sister returned to Peru, he and his father remained in Japan. His father later returned to Peru, but he decided not to go back and, rather, to kill the Peruvian Hiyohito in order to be born as a Japanese Hiyo. He confesses that in order to survive as a Japanese, he had to deny his Peruvian identity, erase his memories of Peru, and bury them in a dream-like fiction. Having many Japanese lovers and creating fake identities based on the lover he happened to be with helped him conceal his identity and memories. He narrates, "I treated the fact that I lived in Peru as a dream, that made-up dream punished me. I every now and then split myself into multiple beings, but I ignored them and now I have to pay for my denial and negligence" (115-16). One may interpret his thoughts articulated in words as a necessary confession through which he acknowledges the impossibility of keeping his memories in oblivion.

Toko's seduction, in this sense, appears to help him recover his memories from the amnesia and recognize the urgency to constantly awaken the past. However, her ultimate desire is to destroy his present being and create a ghost-like entity out of him who is perpetually situated only in his memories of the past. She wants to devour him into her fantasy world, in order to immortalize his past, as she does hers, and impede him from bringing the present to the past and crossing the two time zones. After inciting Hiyohito to put his memories

into words, Toko begins her narration of the past. The reader has already been sporadically exposed to her memories from the beginning of the novel up to this moment, but this time just as Hiyohito's, Toko's memories are coherently put together.

Her parents hated each other, but kept their marriage in order to retain their social status as a government assembly member and accountant. When her parents were together with Toko, they pretended that it was a perfect family. But behind their back, each of them constantly badmouthed each other to Toko, telling her that her other parent did not love her. Toko, in order to escape from this pretentious, fake atmosphere, behaved as a delinquent throughout her junior high school and high school years. At the age of eighteen years old, she met Mitsuo her ex-lover on the street and took off to Houston, Texas. Those years that Toko spent only with Mitsuo her ex-lover were like a paradise, but soon they ran out of money and had to come back to Japan. Toko got pregnant, and Mitsuo reset his mind for a life with the baby and found a job. But Toko could not stand the loss of her life with her lover due to their baby's invasion, while at the same time she wanted to have a happy family with both Mitsuos. Caught between these opposite sentiments, Toko became emotionally disturbed and set fire to their apartment. Mitsuo, her lover, took their son to his hometown and disappeared. Toko regained the custody of their son after a custody battle with her ex-lover's family. That is how she has been living with her son, and she speculates that her lover went back to the US and believes that she and her ex-lover still exist together in the motel in Houston. The red desert around Marukoshi's house parallels the desert of Texas in Toko's mind, and she madly insists in not letting anyone destroy the two (120). Toko ends her narration here, hoping to imprison Hiyohito in the past by interconnecting her memories and his. Hiyohito is framed by Toko to believe that his denial of the past has forced him to be enmeshed in the incident in order to make him suffer and that he needs to live in the recovered past, as Toko does.

However, Hiyohito does not fall into Toko's seductive manipulation. The sound of "Anthony" coming from the living room brings him back to the present reality and enables him to bridge his memories of the past and the present time. Coming back to the present, he finally realizes that he can wake up his past selves sleeping in his memories by enunciating them in words, but that it is impossible to find his "true" self (selves) in words. Hiyohito reasons

out that if he puts his existence into utterance, his self (selves) will become false ones labeled by words:

As I talk about my life story more and more, my present self will disappear, and my phantom selves that appear in the narrative of my life will walk out by themselves. Hiyo does not exist there. Any words, either in Japanese or in Spanish, cannot substitute my flesh and blood. Because I wanted to erase, one by one, my selves enunciated and replaced by words, I kicked my selves. I kicked my selves, absently standing between my selves and those who looked at me. I kicked my selves that I couldn't understand. Then my foot touched that guy. I wasn't punished by the past. I only wanted to be directly touched by a person, like Ana. (121-22)

This puzzling reflection alludes to his two contradictory ways of dealing with the existence of his selves. On the one hand, he feels he has to eliminate all his selves which have been articulated in words in order to assure the existence of his “true” self (“flesh and blood”). With the aim of erasing his named selves, he kicks them without realizing that what he kicks are not his own selves, but the gang member that he almost killed (Later, Hiyohito learns that he did not kill the gang member)³. On the other hand, he observes that his selves have existed as a split caught between what he believes he is and how others perceive him. Since this split being cannot be pinpointed and described in words, it has been a struggle for him to claim who he is. In pursuit of searching for his identity, he touches and kicks his split that he cannot articulate, in order to ascertain his existence. Again, his split that he thinks he is kicking is the gang member. In reflecting on his thoughts, he comes to grapple with the fact that his action of kicking the gang member multiple times is a consequence of his contradictory cries for wanting to erase his selves and wanting to acknowledge his split. It is not that the neglected past curses him and punishes him, as Toko has attempted to convince him.

Now that Hiyohito grasps the correlation between his struggle to negotiate with his multiple selves and his involvement in the violence, he needs to leave “the invented family.” After being almost completely seduced by Toko, he cuts her off and goes back to the living room, from where Mitsuo has disappeared and Ana has returned to. At the end of the novel, Hiyohito decides

to go back to Kawasaki with Ana to fulfill his responsibility. Here, he stumbles on new information of the incident that he obtains from the TV news and from Takerito's father. It turns out that the young man, whom Hiyohito thinks he had ended up killing, is still alive and that he is not a Japanese national, but a third-generation Japanese Dominican who came to Japan three years ago with his *dekasegi* parents. Hiyohito also phones Takerito's father to inform himself about Takerito, who is in jail and learns that the purpose of his whole revenge plan is to get the media's attention because the police did nothing to catch the murderer of El Yamato, a non-Japanese citizen. Takerito had already notified the media about the fight and hoped that the media would treat this incident as a scoop to generate attention in society, so that the police would need to do something about the murder case. According to Takerito's father, Takerito will continue to perform to call attention to the media until he gets his brother's murderer punished, no matter how much his performance engenders madness and violence. His father will support his actions, however destructive they become. Hiyohito is convinced that it is his responsibility to stop Takerito from getting enmeshed in an explosion of havoc. Ana agrees with Hiyohito's decision, and they finally leave the house, walking back on the same path in the red desert as they arrived on, never to return.

The novel ends with almost the same scene as the opening in which Hiyohito, in the same clothes as he arrived in his refuge, walking with Ana in the middle of the "red desert." But this time, Hiyohito is leaving Toko, the invented family, and the desert, because he realizes that he no longer needs any protective, yet artificial place and people that not only allow him to recover his memories of the past, but also force him to live in the past obliterating the present reality and future. Hiyohito's rigidly constructed identity prior to his arrival in Toko's house – a Japanese Peruvian assimilated into Japanese society whose Peruvian side has been erased – is disturbed by his memories of the past awakened in the refuge. Interweaving the past, present, and future, Hiyohito comes to mix all the parts of his identities that emerge from the spaces and times. He chooses not to stay in Toko's artificial home where he feels obliged to always trace back to his roots and deny his assimilated Japaneseness. But this does not mean that he simply goes back to restore the fixed identity of an assimilated individual into Japanese society. On the contrary, Hiyohito now accepts his multiple selves which are always in a state of flux and becoming.

As with Anzaldúa's *mestiza* identity, Hiyohito's multiple unstable identity is born, not as opposed to his (or her) rigid identity constructed by social and cultural norms and pressures, but as a bundle of encounters and tensions among rigid spatiotemporal, cultural, social, and institutional boundaries and borders. Hiyohito's new multiple identity also recalls Deleuze and Parnet's concept of "the lines of segmentarity" ("all kinds of clearly defined segments") which becomes multiple "lines of flight" through a series of entanglements of lines (124-33). Underneath Hiyohito's rigid identity, there exists the impulse to disturb the rigidity which is awakened by the refuge, and he begins to live with his constantly unstable, multiple identity. In other words, Hiyohito is continuously located in the moments of *becoming*, to borrow Hall's expression, not to return to his roots (the definite point of origin or destination), but to continue to find multifarious routes. The reader does not know whether or not Hiyohito will accomplish his mission of impeding Takerito from getting involved in a worse vengeful raid than before, but the closing sentence – "they start walking faster" – emphasizes the *process* of moving and leads the reader to interpret that he goes back to where he came from, not as an assimilated Japanese, but as a person who is in the *process* of finding a route to define who he is and where he belongs to and as a person who is ready to take another route to redefine them over and over again.

Notes

¹ For more detailed examination of *différance*, see Derrida's article "Différance." In this study, Derrida states that any word or concept (signs) "unceasingly dislocates itself in a chain of differing and deferring substitutions" (26), producing a train of infinite signs.

² All the translations of the novel, *Mezameyo to Ningyō wa Utau* (『目覚めよと人魚は歌う』) are mine. Also, the edition that I refer to in this study is the paperback edition published in 2004. Not many critics have examined the novel. The one examination of the novel that I have found is 「視力の密度：星野智幸『目覚めよと人魚は歌う』」, chapter 5 of a book called 『小説の恋愛感触』 by 内藤千珠子 (Chizuko Naito). Here, Naito argues that one of the main character's, Toko's, narrative voice, oscillates back and forth between past and present as well as between illusions and reality, without any chronological order or logical cause and effect relationship. This brings skepticism to the explicable and decipherable feelings of love thus far depicted in a conventionally and formulaically structured and constructed text. Although her study explores Hiyohito's world as a parallel to Toko's to a certain extent, Naito's focus is very different from the topic I center on, which is Hiyohito's split and ambivalent identity.

³ See the next paragraph.

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